

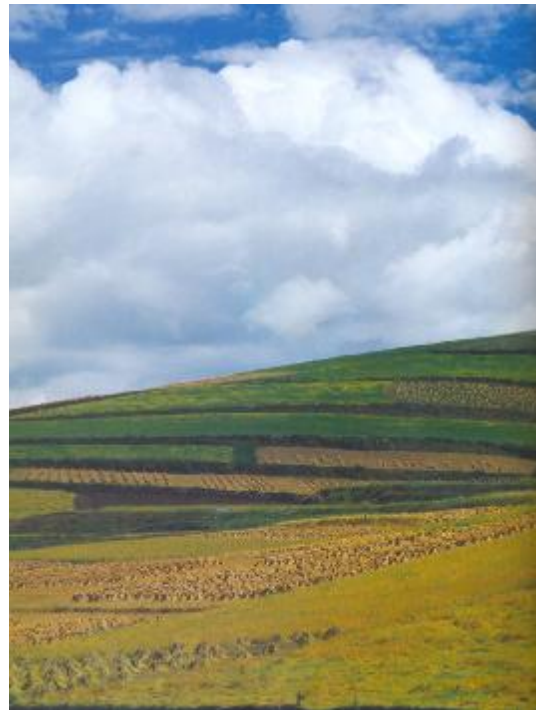
## The Jingpo Ethnic Group



The Munao stakes are the wooden stakes that stand in the center of a square when the Jingpos dance to celebrate the singing-around-Munao festival. The stakes reflect the Jingpo history and culture. In the middle two stakes serve as one group, symbolizing man and woman, male and female, the sun and the moon. The other two at both sides serve as another group, and the design carved around the stakes not only means the dancing line of dancers but also represents the line that Jingpos' ancestors migrated south from the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau. The bar on the base was carved designs of corns and animals. The Munao stakes stand for happiness, forever sun and moon, peace and rich life.

### The population and the environment

The Jingpo people in China, having a population of 132 143, live mostly in the Dehong Dai-Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan province. A few of them are found in the Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture and other areas such as Baoshan, Lincang and Simao, etc. The Jingpos mainly inhabit in tree-covered mountain areas 1400-1800 meters above the level, where the climate is warm and rainy. The land of the area is good for production of rice, dry rice and corn, where rare woods and subtropical fruits also abound.



### The ethnic origin and history

The Jingpos root in the ancient Di and Qiang groups. According to legends their ancestors originally lived in the Nojoi Shingra bum in the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau that means "natural mesa" in Jingpo language. It was said that there was accumulated snow all the year and corns could hardly grow there. About 1500-2000 years ago, in order to find a beautiful home, Jingpo ancestors migrated south down the Lancang River and Jinsha River. Part of them reached the river valley named Jiangxinpo between the Daenmeika River and the Mailikai River. Then they spread around and went into the Dehong region in flocks after 1500s. According to historical records, the Jingpos was also called Xunchuan, Echang or other appellations. They were ever insultingly called "people living in mountains" or "savages" because they inhabited in high mountains.

## **The clans and the language**

During the long history of Jingpos, they divided into five branch clans such as Jingpo, Zaiwa, Lange (Langsu), Leqi (Chashan) and Bola. Languages of all the five clans belong to the Tibetan-Myanames Family, but the Jingpo language and Zaiwa Language was created in the end of 1800s and the Zaiwa language was created in 1950s, both of which are spelled by Latin letters and are spoken widely in Jingpo areas.

## **The dwelling characteristics—The bamboo house continuously rebuilt**

The Jingpos villages, with a wood gate at the beginning of road towards village, mostly stood at the foot of mountains and face a river valley or a dam. Traditional houses, with walls woven by thin bamboo strips and roofs hatched, were of bamboo and wood. Houses were generally rebuilt every six or seven years. When one villager did rebuilding, he had the help of all the villagers. When the new house was completed and the host reported success by firing a shot, all the villagers, singing and dancing, came to say congratulations. Traditional houses were simple and practical. They has two stories. The upper floor was the living quarters for family members and the lower one was for keeping animals. But now family members don't live in the same house with animals and houses are built with brick and tile other than bamboo and wood.

## **The costume characteristics—Big silver bubble on shoulders and sword on waist**



Women usually wear red scarves on heads and black short jackets with buttons down the front middle or front left. Matching the jacket is a colorful knitted skirt and a woolen leg-guard. Women like wearing silver ornaments such as big silver bubble and silver chain. Jingpo men usually wear black short jackets with buttons down the front and short and loose trousers. Elderly people have their heads covered with black turbans. Young people prefer white turbans. All carry elaborately embroidered bags containing items such as areca and tobacco. According to ancient, Jingpos, going out invariably, wear swords on their waist and their clothes were of no collars and sleeves. Until today, Jingpo men go

out with long knives on their waist or rifles taken with them, as show the brave spirit of Jingpos.

## **The dietetic custom—The “ghost chicken ” and “green leaf feast”**

Although maize is more important in some places, rice is regarded as the staple food. Vegetables are grown in cottage gardens. Jingpos also gather wild herbs and fruit as supplementary food. Jingpos are fond of watery wine and “shaji” (a kind of chewing tobacco made of cigarette, reed and slaked lime). Of Jingpo dishes, special vinegar and pepper, “ghost chicken” and roast meat are traditional. Jingpos used to take food by banana leaves while laboring outside. The green leaf feast today, featuring liquor and rice in a thick bamboo tube, with banana leaf tablecloth and dishes wrapped with green leaf, no bowl and chopsticks, comes from that custom. Visitors feel as if it returned to original purity and simplicity when they stay in a thatched cottage and enjoy green food with bare hands.

### **The marriage custom—“The blood of lineage will not change”**

Young people arrange their marriage themselves and call live affairs “gantuocong” which means visiting girls. While night falling, groups of girls and boys go into bamboo forest or the public house and express their love through folk songs. As a result, they get to know each other and fall in love, and then get married at last. Jingpo wedding is very lively and ceremonious. What’s more, the ceremony of crossing grass-bridge is held for bride. Jingpo brides used not to stay at bridegroom’s home, as have been changed now.

Jingpos never intermarried between the children of sisters and between people of the same surname. In addition, one-way intermarriage between children of a brother and a sister was prevalent. It meant that son of father’s sister must marry daughter of mother’s brother while son of mother’s brother mustn’t marry daughter of father’s sister. As a result, the blood lineage will not change. Marrying husband’s brother and bride snatching, once popular, reflect the vestige of ancient marriage custom.

### **The festival conventions—Singing around Munao stake**

The most important traditional Jingpo festival is “singing around Munao stake” from January 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> of the lunar year. At that movement, there are four Munao stakes with totem design standing in the center of the ground. The design is about the sun, mountains and snaky roads. It means that Jingpos, coming from the remote Qinghai-Xizang plateau, are offspring of the sun. And those snaky roads stand for the hard migrating process of Jingpos’ ancestors. At the same time, they are the dance line while the singing around the Munao stake is going on. While dancing and singing, the two leading dancers, wearing haps with feather and yellow robes with gold designs of pythons, performed a sword dance and lead dancers to change order. Male dancers brandish silver glittering swords and female dancers wield colorful fans, supple and graceful. The spectacle is of great momentum with strains of music with drumbeats accompanied.

### **The religious beliefs—Believing in ghost and Dongsa**

Jingpos widely believe in original religions. Most of them believe in ghost and few of them believe in the Christianity. Jingpos used to practice fetishism and believed that the sun,

the moon, birds, animals, boulders and disease, wedding, funerals and combat. Dongsa, the Jingpos wizard, did all the sacrificial rites. When elderly people died, Jingpos offered sacrifices to take souls home. So far, with the development of science and technology, Jingpos are less superstitious.

### **The political development—From “shanguan” system to autonomy**

In the past, the native chieftain, “shanguan”, ruled the Jingpos and there were three classes in Jingpo society, headmen, common peasants and slaves. Originally, “shanguan” was just the head of the Jingpos who work for the public. Later the institution of “shanguan” developed into a kind of feudal autocratic system. But “shanguan” were relatively separated from each other and form no political union.

The Dehong Dai-Jingpo Autonomous Region was established in 1953 and practice autonomy in the Jingpos areas. The Jingpos people elected their own representatives to the leading bodies of the autonomous region. In addition, many Jingpos work in education, science and technology and culture fields. Jingpos changed the backward conditions in Jingpo areas. In addition, there has have great progress in agriculture, industry, border trade, etc.